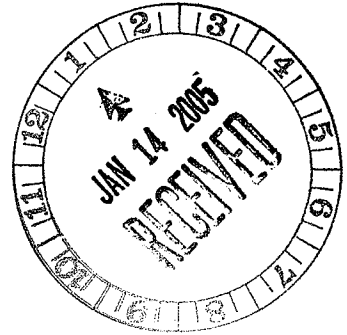


January 5, 2005

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington D.C. 20423
Attn: Rini Ghosh
STB Docket No. FD 34284

ET-1357



I am Archie Gerdes. My land is being divided in two by the rail line between Dunlay and the quarry site. This land has been in my family since 1891.

Will I be compensated for the loss of deer, hog and other game hunting? This is a big economic factor for Medina County and myself. All my improvements are on the West side of the ranch. Will Vulcan pay for a water well, pens, barn and utilities? Will Vulcan keep up easement fence and keep noxious weeds out?

Will Vulcan be responsible for clean-up of de-railment and/or chemical spill? Also, will I be compensated for devaluation of my property also flood damage due to trestle or Bridges over Elm and Quihi creeks; who will pay for this?

Who will pay me for forced sale of livestock?

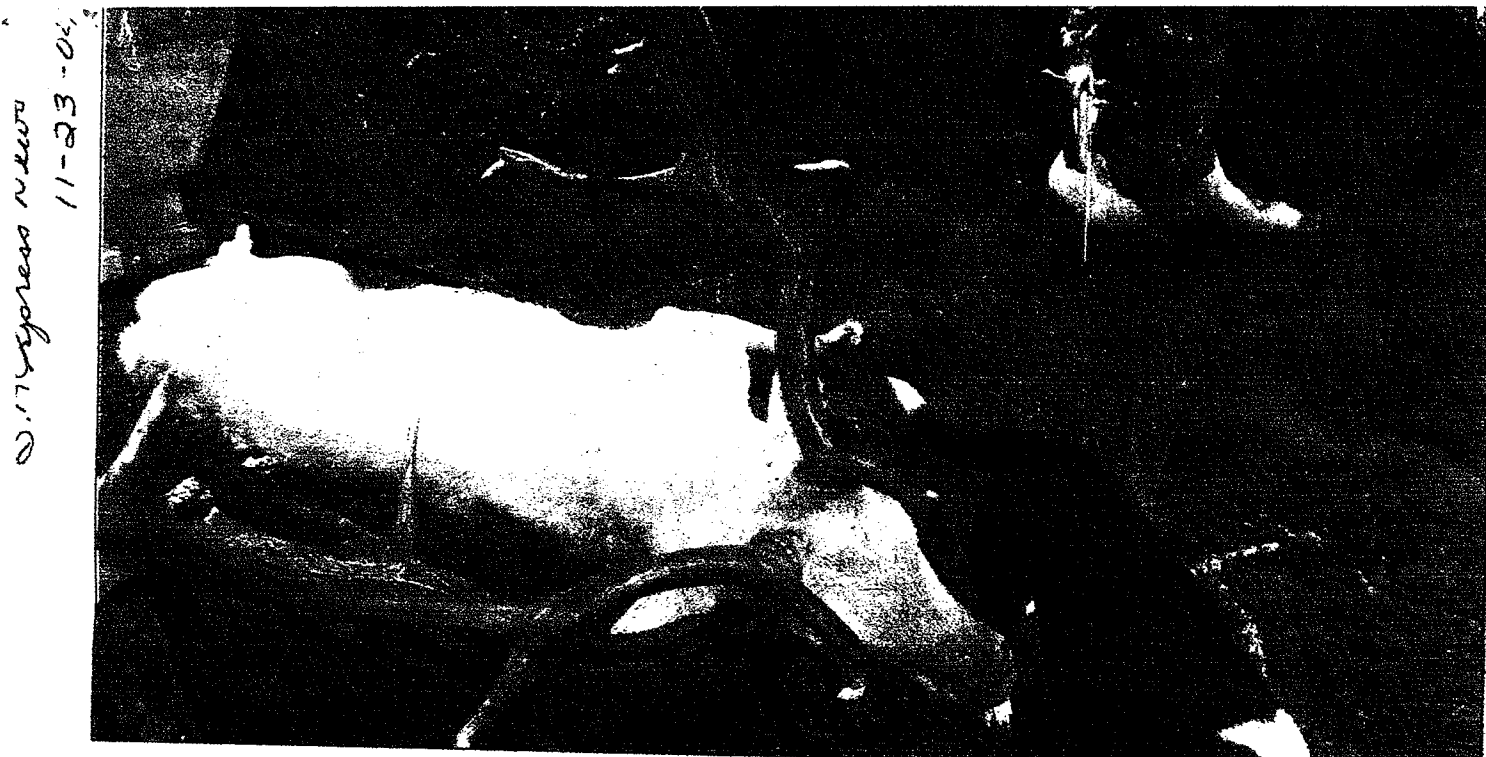
The four mile water hole is the only source of water I have in this one pasture. It is spring fed and has never gone dry. Indian Scouts watered their horses there in the early days. If it goes dry will Vulcan drill me a well?

Archie Gerdes

Archie Gerdes
450 CR 351
Hondo, TX 78861

P.S. Although Vulcan has not notified me as to what route they will take, MCEAA, Inc. has shown me a map with their top choices. Either one will be devastating to my hunting, ranching and farming operation. I hear now they want a 2,000 feet easement so they can build a road and houses for their employees along the tracks. What a mess that would be.

Attn. S.A. Express article - Lucrative Game, 11-23-04



Hunters and guides load up deer after a hunt at the Garrison Ranch west of Medina on Sunday.

PHOTOS BY JERRY LARA/STAFF

Lucrative GAME

Cattle ranchers find bonanza in leasing to deer hunters.

By WILLIAM PACK
EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

A fifth-generation Bandera County rancher, Paul Garrison III had little trouble moving out of the cattle business in the early '90s to join the growing wave of landowners who lease their acreage to trophy-hungry hunters.

"The land is better suited for deer production," Garrison said of a 7,200-acre spread that features rugged hillsides but little lush bottomland. "It became obvious over time that's what needed to be done."

"It was a business decision."

That leasing business has been good for Garrison and

scores of other ranchers who have decided that beef production is not their best or most dependable source of income.

Having rented land to hunters since 1957, the Garrison family saw its lease income grow from about a third of the year's take to about half in the early 1980s. The ranch moved completely to selling hunting rights for deer and exotic animals in the early '90s and through strict management practices has developed what Garrison acknowledged is a lucrative operation.

He makes about three times more today on hunting rights than he did before as a cattle rancher, he said.

Garrison estimates that about 90 percent of the ranches in the region have made the same move to hunting leases. Most are in their busiest time of year now, with whitetail deer season lasting into January and into Febru-

See CATTLE/6E



ABOVE: Hunting guides Michael Felts (left) and Micke Harvey dress the morning kill at the ranch.
LEFT: Paul Garrison III photographs a successful hunt. Garrison's family has rented land to hunters since 1957 and has seen its lease income grow through the years.



Cattle ranchers are making some bucks on deer

CONTINUED FROM 1E

ary under special permits.

"This is not livestock country," Garrison said.

A statement of near heresy to generations of rural Texans, that claim is gaining wider acceptance throughout South Texas, the Hill Country and beyond.

Though no precise number is available statewide showing how many ranches have dropped cattle in favor of deer or other game, most observers say the trend toward hunting is strong.

"The hunting industry in Texas is worth \$3.7 billion," said Mike Berger, wildlife director for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "It's what keeps many ranches together today."

The numbers tell the story.

A buck with antlers that rank at the top level of a nationally recognized scoring system draws more than \$40,000, and \$10,000 for a smaller trophy deer isn't uncommon.

Productive deer and quail leases in South Texas can produce \$10 to \$15 an acre for landowners, which can exceed grazing lease prices by 50 percent, said Neal Wilkins, extension wildlife specialist at Texas A&M University.

Profits per acre from cattle operations may be as strong as deer lease profits in some areas of the state because the cattle market has been up for the past few years. But officials said cattle raising takes more time and normally more upfront costs than wildlife management. And the market for beef has been subject to more cycles than the hunting industry.

Karl Kinsel, a South Texas cattle rancher and hunting lease operator, said that, typically, three years out of every decade, rainfall levels and cattle prices allow a cattle rancher to do as well or better than lease operators. That's not been an acceptable ratio for most landowners.

Kinsel estimates that 35 percent of the cattle ranchers in South Texas and the Hill Country have moved exclusively to wildlife — meaning deer — management.

"Without a doubt, 75 percent or better" are involved in a combination of cattle raising and deer hunting, Kinsel said.

"In the cattle business, in a down year, you can lose money. In deer leasing, you don't do that. There's not as much risk involved," said Kinsel, executive director of the Texas Deer Association.

The amount of money paid for hunting rights has escalated so rapidly that it has fueled a related land sales trend that allows a hunter to own a smaller tract than he or she formerly stalked under lease. Habitat experts worry about the effect that fragmentation may have on wildlife, but the activity clearly has driven up land prices.

Kinsel, who also sells rural tracts, said property that was going for \$700 an acre five years ago is now selling for \$1,000 an acre. It can move closer to \$1,250 an acre if the property has a lodge or some other hunting-related improvement.

"People don't pay \$1,000 an acre to run cattle. They do it for hunting," he said.

Barry Dunn, director of the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management, doesn't deny that hunting operations are taking up more land that was devoted to cattle. And he agrees that the money generated by hunting has brought much-needed revenue to rural America.

But he also believes hunting and cattle raising can and should co-exist because of the benefits each draws from the other.

A ranch that runs fewer cattle because it is making money off hunting leases is good for the rancher and for the habitat, Dunn said.



JERRY LARA/STV

A barasingha buck looks on at the Garrison Ranch west of Medin on Sunday. Paul Garrison III estimates that about 90 percent of the region's cattle ranches are in the hunting leasing business.

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